

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8737

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 17580

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SGEN, SP, VT

SUBJECT: RECENT CASAROLI VISIT TO MADRID

REF: A) MADRID 7761; B) MADRID 7642; C) ROME 10083 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH CASAROLI'S LATEST MADRID VISIT RESULTED IN AGREEMENT ON A DRAFT REVISED CONCORDAT, DIFFERENCES ON ESSENTIAL POINTS SUCH AS NAMING OF BISHOPS, "FUERO ECLESIASTICO" AND LAY ASSOCIATIONS STILL SO FAR APART THAT FINAL AGREEMENT NOT VERY LIKELY SOON. END SUMMARY.

1. ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI HAS INFORMED US THAT MAIN RESULT OF HIS RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN MADRID WAS AGREEMENT ON A WORKING DRAFT WHICH BOTH SIDES HAD DEVELOPED ON BASIS OF DECISIONS TAKEN DURING FOREIGN MINISTER CORTINA'S VISIT TO ROME LAST JULY. IN CASAROLI'S WORDS, 95 PER CENT OF DRAFT CONCORDAT IS MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE; HOWEVER, REMAINING 5 PER CENT EMBODIES SUFFICIENTLY DIVERGENT VIEWS TO MAKE REACHING OF FULL AGREEMENT FAR FROM CERTAIN. MOST INTRANSIGENT PROBLEMS SEEM TO BE THOSE OF BISHOPS AND "FUERO ECLESIASTICO" AS DESCRIBED PARAS 3 AND 4 OF REFTEL C.

2. CASAROLI SEES NO ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH GOS ABOUT CONCORDAT REVISION. HE POINTS OUT THAT SPANISH
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EPISCOPATE OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTS TALKS, ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF

BISHOPS DO NOT FAVOR ACTUALLY CONCLUDING AN AGREEMENT WITH PRESENT GOVERNMENT. IN RESPONSE TO PRESSURE FROM SPANISH HIERARCHY, CASAROLI PROLONGED SCHEDULING HIS LATEST TRIP BUT FELT THAT GIVEN GOS PRESSURE, FURTHER DELAY WOULD HAVE BEEN "DISHONEST AND UNDIGNIFIED". AS HE HAS PREVIOUSLY DONE, HE STRONGLY DENIED LACK OF PROPER CONSULTATIONS WITH SPANISH BISHOPS, NOTING THAT "SPANISH HIERARCHY IS MOST CONSULTED IN WORLD". CASAROLI NOTED THAT SEVERAL BISHOPS AS WELL AS MANY CATHOLIC POLITICAL AND LAY FIGURES BELIEVE THAT WHATEVER AGREEMENT ON CONCORDAT CAN BE REACHED WHILE FRANCO STILL ALIVE WILL BE BETTER THAN WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH HIS SUCCESSORS. THESE ELEMENTS SEE TWO POSSIBLE POST-FRANCO REGIMES; A RIGHT-WING FALANGIST TAKEOVER WITH STRONG ANTI-CLERICAL ELEMENTS OR A REVOLUTIONARY LEFTIST REGIME. CASAROLI STATED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY THAT THIS VIEW IS RIGHT OR WRONG BUT THAT IT CERTAINLY MERITED RESPECT.

3. CASAROLI SAID TIME FRAME FOR NEXT MEETING HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED BUT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE IN ROME. HE COULD NOT PREDICT WHAT WAS LIKELIHOOD OF AGREEING ON FINAL REVISION OF 1953 CONCORDAT NOR DID HE KNOW HOW SANGUINE FOREIGN MINISTER CORTINA MIGHT BE ABOUT SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS DURING FRANCO'S LIFETIME.

4. COMMENT: HOLY SEE PROBABLY HAS NO AVERSION TO AGREEING ON A REVISION OF PRESENT CONCORDAT WITH FRANCO GOVERNMENT IF IT COULD ACHIEVE A RESPECTABLE DOCUMENT. THIS NOT TERRIBLY LIKELY, HOWEVER, SINCE GOS HAS OFFERED CONCESSIONS ON QUESTIONS OF NAMING BISHOPS, "FUERO ECLESIASTICO" AND LAY ASSOCIATIONS (REF C) ONLY IN EXCHANGE FOR VATICAN'S PLACING UNACCEPTABLE LIMITATIONS ON CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN SPAIN. WE SUSPECT THAT CASAROLI HIMSELF MAY BE TEMPTED TO PREFER NEGOTIATING WITH A KNOWN ADVERSARY THAN AWAITING AN UNKNOWN ONE. THIS IS APPROACH WHICH HAS MOTIVATED MUCH OF HIS DEALINGS WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIMES. THERE NO DOUBT THAT HE HARBORS A FEAR THAT AS BAD AS THINGS ARE FOR THE CHURCH IN MANY COUNTRIES, THEY CAN ALWAYS GET WORSE. VATICAN SEEMS FULLY AWARE CERTAIN SPANISH CIRCLES WOULD OBJECT TO VATICAN SIGNING AN AGREEMENT WITH PRESENT GOVERNMENT, BUT THEY SEEM CONVINCED THAT THIS IS A MINORITY VIEWPOINT. VOLPE

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